

they are fired on and protecting their own base. In other words, they are prohibited from coming to the aid of an ally under attack.

Let's be frank. If a NATO member cannot handle the responsibilities of alliance membership, they should not enjoy the privileges and prestige of membership. Our NATO allies need to remember what was agreed to in Bonn in December of 2001. The alliance gave their solemn word to help Afghanistan overcome the ravages of terrorism and civil war. The credibility of our allies is at stake.

The NATO alliance has a very simple mission. It is: If one is attacked, we are all attacked. America has come to the aid of European nations well into the last century—throughout the last century. America was attacked on 9/11, 2001, and we have not seen the response that would meet the test of the mission of NATO. We have not seen our allies on the field in Iraq, with notable exceptions. Great Britain has always been there. Others have been there part time. But America has carried the lion's share. They are carrying, by far, the lion's share in Iraq today.

Afghanistan is the hotbed in that area, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, of al-Qaida, which was the attacker of our country on 9/11. NATO agreed in December of 2001 that they would be engaged in Afghanistan, and yet NATO has not fulfilled its responsibility, even though the lion's share of our troops—our troops who have done an outstanding job, our troops who are fatigued from overdeployment have done their jobs—have not had the help of NATO.

NATO is supported by the taxpayers of America because we thought it would be an alliance that would come to our aid, as we have come to the aid of every member of NATO. The United States pays 24 percent of the operating costs of NATO.

I am the ranking member of the Military Construction Subcommittee of Appropriations, and I can tell you that the military enhancements and military construction for NATO are in the range of \$230 million in this year's bill. It is usually in that range—sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less. But basically America is paying a quarter of a billion dollars every year for military construction and enhancements for NATO.

There are not NATO bases in America. They are in other places. Yet we are having to now put more troops on the line because our NATO allies have restrictions, except for the ones I have named that are in full combat and full partners and doing their jobs, and we appreciate that so much.

But I think the NATO alliance must step up to the plate. As we are debating more troops, I know we will do what is necessary because America always does what is necessary, and I think our NATO allies know that, but sometimes they just sit back and let us do it. They let our taxpayers pay the tab. They let

our troops be the ones who lead in the field.

We went to Bosnia. Bosnia was in their backyard, but they needed us to step in; also in Kosovo. We have been there for them to step in because when it is necessary America is there. But when we are debating the increase in troop strength in Afghanistan—which everyone who has been there knows we are going to need—let's not forget to bring in another source that would help America in this time of need, while we are continuing to keep our commitments in Iraq with very little help from the outside, while we still have troops in Bosnia, and while we have 64,000 troops, the lion's share, in Afghanistan.

Now we are looking at sending more, and I think now is the time for us to put it on the table for our NATO allies, that they have a commitment, if the NATO alliance is relevant. "If one is attacked, we are all attacked" is a great, simple, clear mission. But it is not simply successful because we have the right mission. It takes every member doing its fair share. And, most certainly, at a time when America is doing so much more, this is the time for our allies to take the shackles off, to engage, to be in combat, to put our treasure on the line with their treasure and not just our treasure alone.

I think it is time for us—and I call on the President—and fulfill the mission. Terrorism is the enemy of every NATO country. This is not an American fight. It is a global fight for freedom. If we lose in Afghanistan and give unfettered territory for operations of al-Qaida, every NATO country will be attacked. Don't they see it? Don't they have the commitment and the courage to stand up? Just because it is in another country and seems far away, can they be so naive?

When we talk about more American troops, as the President has said we will, I ask the President to look for more troops from other sources as well and to ask our allies to step to the plate and be our partners as NATO envisioned.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). The Senator from Maryland.

(The remarks of Mr. CARDIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1678 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. CARDIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IN PRAISE OF ORLANDO FIGUEROA

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise once again to recognize the service of

one of America's great Federal employees.

Last week I spoke about an outstanding public servant who refused to give up when she was faced with life-changing trauma. My friend Vice President BIDEN says America's greatest attribute is that when it gets knocked down, it gets right back up.

Perseverance is one of our national strengths. It has seen us through the lean years and the times of war. It has also seen us through the setbacks of our march of science and discovery. In one such setback a few years ago, NASA experienced a string of failures to land an exploratory probe on Mars. After the inspirational voyages of Viking 1 and 2, which landed on the red planet of the 1970s, NASA did not send spacecraft to the surface of Mars for 20 years. After a brief but successful return in 1997 by the Mars Pathfinder, NASA prepared a series of missions aimed at exploring the Martian surface and laying the groundwork for a future astronaut mission.

The enthusiasm at NASA and in our Nation's scientific community quickly turned to disappointment as two consecutive missions failed to reach their destination. Some of my colleagues may remember how frustrating it was to learn that one craft burned up in Mars' atmosphere because a contractor measured in English units instead of the metric system used by NASA.

When Orlando Figueroa took charge of NASA's Mars Exploration Rover project in 2001, he set out to change the mood. Optimism and excitement had long been the driving force behind NASA's successes, and Orlando knew that despite recent setbacks, NASA could once again achieve and inspire.

Less than 3 years later, under Orlando's leadership, NASA's Mars Exploration Rover project successfully landed some of the most advanced technology ever created onto the Martian surface.

He pushed his team to look forward, not backward, and Orlando's leadership was critical as the team faced challenges in advance of a rapidly approaching launch date.

The Mars Exploration Rovers—called Spirit and Opportunity—successfully landed on opposite ends of Mars in January 2004 after a 6-month journey.

Together, they traversed several miles of the planet's surface and captured over 100,000 high resolution photographs for use by scientists studying the Martian climate and soil.

The tests conducted by Spirit and Opportunity have brought our researchers closer to finding evidence of water and possibly past life on our neighboring planet.

The Mars Exploration Rover project also reignited the imaginations of countless students.

I have spoken a number of times already about the importance of supporting education in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics or "STEM." The success

of Orlando and his team at NASA contributes greatly to our efforts to renew interest in space exploration and scientific discovery among our Nation's youth. It was this same enthusiasm that first led us to orbit the Earth and reach the Moon.

Orlando exemplifies the kind of perseverance endemic to America's civil servants.

He and his team demonstrated once again that our Nation, when we get knocked down, can get back up and accomplish any task we set for ourselves.

It was for this reason that Orlando was awarded the Service to America—Federal Employee of the Year medal in 2005.

I hope that all the members of this body will join me in recognizing the important contribution made by Orlando Figueroa and all of the hard-working employees of NASA.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, as others of my colleagues have done, I have come to the floor periodically—pretty much every day we have been in session in the last couple months—and shared letters from people from Ohio who are in the midst of a personal health care crisis—small businesspeople who want to cover employees but simply cannot afford to, and individual young people who are removed from their parents' insurance when finishing school or who come back from the Army and cannot get insurance, and people who have preexisting conditions—all kinds of people who, in many cases, thought they had good health care insurance, and they got very sick, it got expensive, and they lost the insurance.

I wish to share some letters again tonight. These are new letters and stories I have heard. Over the last month or so, I have done townhall meetings in Cincinnati, where 1,500 people showed up, and this is the most conservative part of Ohio. Two-thirds of them supported the President's health care effort and about a third opposed it. I did a large townhall meeting also in Columbus, and I did roundtables—135 or so—around Ohio in the last couple years, where I have listened to people talk about issues and what we can do to make my State better. I have been in all 88 counties doing that. I did an electronic townhall meeting the other night, where several hundred people were on and I took questions and explained the health care legislation; and I especially tried to answer questions about some of the misinformation.

It is important to understand that the insurance industry has a lot to lose with this health care bill. They like the system the way it is. It works for them and they are immensely profitable. Their executives are making \$10 million, \$20 million a year. Some of their CEOs and top management put out some significant misinformation about this bill to protect their economic interests. That is important to remember.

Elizabeth is from Clermont County, along the Ohio River, east of the Cincinnati, a fast-growing suburban county. She writes:

I am 25 years old and unemployed. Years ago, I was diagnosed with a blood disorder. Up until I turned 25, I was covered under my father's health insurance through his work.

When I turned 25, I had to find my own health insurance, but because of my pre-existing condition, I was denied by most insurances.

The best one I could get is of very poor quality and it's very expensive.

That happens with a lot of young people. They are under their parents' insurance and they finish school and move out and the insurance companies drop them when they are 22, 23, 24 years old, even when they are employed, because people at that age—similar to the pages in front of us—are probably on their parents' insurance, but when they finish school and get jobs—and they are probably not going to be the kind of jobs, in many cases, that have health insurance—except that, by that time, we are going to have passed this health insurance bill. But one of the things our bill does is says no insurance company may drop you from their plan until you turn 26. So a young person who finishes school and is trying to get on their feet or who goes to the Army for 3 years and then comes back out and maybe is living at home trying to get on his or her feet, until he or she turns 26, he or she can continue to be on their parents' insurance plan. Once they turn 26 and they don't have insurance, they can go into the insurance exchange, which we can talk about later.

So this bill will absolutely matter to somebody such as Elizabeth.

Sharon is from Portage County. She says:

My husband will turn 65 at the end of the year. He wants to retire, and after working hard for his company for 30 years, he deserves it.

But I'm only 62 and recently lost my job. If my husband retires, I will have no coverage for three years.

She has to wait until she is 65.

We will not be able to afford insurance for me based on his retirement savings.

Please help us and many others who are struggling.

Sharon lives east of Akron, the home of Kent State University, near Ravenna, Aurora, and other communities there. Sharon's situation would allow her, regardless of her income, to be able to go into the insurance exchange, which means that if she is fairly low income, she will get subsidies from the

government to help pay her premium. With the insurance exchange, she will be able to choose, under the plan we have written so far, whether she wants to go with Aetna, Blue Cross, Medical Mutual, a not-for-profit insurance company in Ohio, or perhaps into SummaCare in the Akron area or into the public option. The legislation provides for an option that is not private—a government option—that will do several things. First, the public option will keep the private insurance companies honest. They will quit gaming the system if they have to compete against a public Medicare look-alike plan.

Second, the public option will help to drive costs down because they will compete against these private insurance companies, and that is so very important.

Third, the public option will be available particularly in rural areas where there is not a particularly competitive market. In southwest Ohio, for instance, two insurance companies have 85 percent of the market. A public option would inject needed competition where there is not any today.

Margaret from Greene County in the Xenia and Jamestown area said:

My husband works for a small business. Although we have health insurance through his employer, my husband has not been to a doctor for a few years.

I believe he is putting off regular checkups because he is afraid the doctor will diagnose one of those conditions, such as diabetes, that blacklists people from health insurance.

Small businesses cannot afford to have even one person with a chronic illness on their insurance because it raises the rates so much for the company.

I understand that the insurance and drug industries have too much money and political power, but my husband can't afford to lose his job.

First, about that last point, 5 years ago I was in the House of Representatives. In those days, when President Bush was in the White House, he pushed a bill through the Congress to partially privatize Medicare. It was a total giveaway to the drug companies and insurance companies. Those days are over. With the legislation we pass, the drug companies are going to be unhappy with it and insurance companies are going to be unhappy with it. I want them to be treated fairly, but I don't want them to have the power in this health care system they have had in the last few years, and they won't under this legislation.

Margaret is right about a small business. If you work for a company that has 20 employees—say you own a small business with 10, 15, 20 employees and one of them gets very sick and they have to take expensive biologics or go into the hospital and their costs are high. The insurance company will do one of two things: It will either cut you out of the plan or cut the small business out of the plan or it will raise rates so high on that small business—because they have 1 or 2 really expensive cases, the insurance companies will raise their rates so much for that